

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Developmental Psychology: examines changes in physiology, cognition and social behaviour over the lifespan.

Developmental changes occur in a time-ordered sequence that is characteristic to all humans:

- Orderly
- Cumulative
- Predictable

Development starts in the womb

Human development begins from the moment of conception (all human life begins from a single cell)

Parental development progresses through three stages:

- Zygote/germinal stage (from conception – approx. 14 days)
- Embryonic stage (Cell implants in the womb and becomes an embryo, 2 weeks – 10 weeks)
- Foetal stage (from week 10 – week 40, growing stage)

Teratogen; anything which has the potential to cause a birth defect in an infant (alcohol, drugs, diseases etc)

The more that the embryo is exposed to a teratogen the more likely that the foetus will not survive the full term or may be born with difficulties/diseases.

When/how long/how much the teratogen is exposed to the foetus will determine its health.

Example: Thalidomide

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Vision

- Babies vision is quite blurry and see double
- Can only see about a foot in front of them

Taste and smell

- Taste buds are formed in week 9 of pregnancy
- Very sensitive from time of birth

Auditory

- Developed at about 16 weeks, at about 24 weeks they will turn their heads in the direction of sound

Reflexes

Any involuntary movement

- Babies are born with many reflexes (e.g stepping reflex, turning head reflex, grasping)

Environmental differences on Brain Development

- ➔ Malnutrition
- ➔ Enriched environments
- ➔ Physical contact
- ➔ Opportunities to develop physiological and cognitive skills (E.g walking, language, social ability)

Cognitive development

Cognitive development refers to transitions in children's patterns of thinking including:

- Reasoning
- Memory
- Problem solving
- Abstract thought
- Concept information

Discontinuous or continuous development?

No agreement amongst psychologists on how development occurs

Piaget's stages of cognitive development

SENSORIMOTOR STAGE (0-2)	PREOPERATIONAL (2-7)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Object permanence (if baby can't see something, it doesn't exist)- Differentiates self from objects (understands that they are different from the dog)- Recognises self as agent (understand where they end and the rest of the world begins, can move things)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Begins to think symbolically (understand that something can represent something else)- Thinking is egocentric (can't cognitively comprehend that what you see is different to what they see)- Cannot achieve conservation (difficulty understanding that an objects properties remain the same even if the appearance is different)
CONCRETE OPERATIONAL (7-11)	FORMAL OPERATIONS (12+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Can reason on concrete objects & situations (apply rules, but only to a physical object that they can see and touch, not a hypothetical situation)- Attains reversibility & conservation (can do the conservation task, and understand that things are reversible)- Decentration (ability to focus on more than one attribute of an object)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Abstract reasoning (understand more hypothetical situations)- Deductive reasoning (being able to apply a rule in a hypothetical way)- Systematic thinking versus trial and error (test theories and hypotheses)

Piaget figured that development occurred through stages (discontinuous)

Continuous theories

INFORMATION PROCESSING PROCESSES

As children age, their cognitive abilities improve substantially

- Information-search strategy
- Processing speed, attention and response inhibition
- Working and long-term memory (how many words you can recall improves over time)

Information processing

Searching strategy

Working and long-term memory

Moral development

Morality (operational definition) “involves the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and to behave accordingly” – (Weiten, 2005, p. 308)

Morale development can be examined:

- Cognitively (e.g moral reasoning)
- Behaviourally (e.g prosocial behaviour)
- Socio-emotionally (e.g moral affect)

Kohlberg’s stages of moral development

PRE-CONVENTIONAL (0-9 years approx.)

- a. Punishment obedience (thinks about punishment)
- b. Instrumental-hedonistic (thinks about what makes you happy)

CONVENTIONAL (most adolescents and some adults)

- c. Good-child orientation (want to be perceived as good)
- d. Law-and-order orientation (do whatever they will to obey law)

POST-CONVENTIONAL (some adults but not all)

Self-chosen principles of morality based on our thoughts of fairness and justice

- e. Social-contract (yes there are rules but there are also times when they need to be broken)
- f. Universal ethical principles (e.g human life trumps property rights so you can break property law to save a life)

Evaluating Kohlberg’s theory

We don’t always reason at the same level

Some support across culture and ages

- Children progress from pre-conventional to post-conventional through adolescence
- Post-conventional reasoning is fairly uncommon even by adulthood

Western bias

- Over emphasis on justice and fairness
- Cultural differences on ethical principles